

## **COMMUNICATIVE FLUENCY ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING**

The goal of a speaking component in a class should be to encourage the acquisition of communication skills and to foster real communication in and out of the classroom. It follows then that the objectives for developing oral fluency will address this goal by setting forth specific content, activities and methods which foster communication.[1]

Accordingly, a necessary first step is a thorough analysis – the teacher can determine the kinds of situations in which the students will find themselves, the linguistic information they'll need to possess, and the resources they have available.

Once speech functions have been identified, it can then be determined which linguistic structures are most naturally related to these particular speech functions and tasks.

The next step concerns several factors which must be considered in choosing both the specific material to be processed and the methodology to cover it with. The most important factor of all is the level of students. While beginners require a recycling of material, from controlled practice and drills to more “free expression” activities, relatively advanced students may need to polish already developed skills.

As a rule, students are exposed to three key items of teaching speaking programme: (1) form-focused instruction, that is, attention to details of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and so forth; (2) meaning-focused instruction, that is, opportunities to produce meaningful spoken messages with real communicative purposes; and (3) opportunities to improve fluency. In fact, elements of all of the above mentioned items should be present throughout the teaching programme, with emphasis on form-focused instruction at the elementary levels and on meaning-focused instruction at the higher levels.[2]

A problem in meaning-focused speaking activities is to select the activity which actually develops the students' knowledge of language items. For this purpose different “participation” activities may be helpful. The students work in pairs or groups of three or four. For example, a variety of *Jigsaw tasks* like *The same or different*, *Information search*, *Strip story* help practice such skills of learners as listening and/or reading comprehension and providing the bits of information to the rest of the group. Besides the students have to organize the process of finding the solutions which requires some of interactional language.[3]

### **Information search**

*Aims*

*Skills* –listening comprehension, speaking

*Language* –asking for and giving information, making conjectures, agreeing or disagreeing

*Other* –general knowledge

*Preparation* – information cards which contain different pieces of information, one card per student

*Procedure*

Step 1. The handout is distributed to the pairs of students and the task explained. Each of the students A and B has some information about popular operating systems. The task is to find out the complete description of the operating systems by sharing information from the cards.

Step 2. To present the received information to the rest of pairs.

To practice interactive language, for instance agreeing, comparing, contradicting, disagreeing, giving reasons ranking exercises as well as jigsaw tasks may stimulate the students to discuss the difference of opinions. Reluctant students can be made to discuss their lists in detail for their group only. Here are some examples of ranking exercises. *Priorities, Values ladder, Rank order.* These exercises require students to put a certain number of items from a given list into an order of importance or preferences. This rearranging phase is usually followed by a period of discussion, when students explain or defend their choices in pairs or small groups. Furthermore, the discussion of personal ranking will lead some students to question their own decision and increase their tolerance and mutual understanding.

### **Looking for a job**

*Aims*

*Skills* –reading comprehension, speaking

*Language* –arguing, reacting to other people’s statements (agreeing, disagreeing, contradicting, criticising, doubting, defending one’s position, giving in)

*Other* –cooperation, role taking

*Preparation* – handout for each group

*Procedure*

Step 1. The handout is distributed to the groups and the task explained. Each group imagines that they are members of the local council who have to select someone for the vacant post of a social worker from four applications that have been submitted. As the first step the groups decide on their criteria for selection, based on the advertisement and the background information on the handout as well as their own judgement. They discuss the applicants and rank them according to their suitability. (10-15 minutes)

Step 2. Each group selects a speaker who has to explain and defend the choice of his group. If one of the other members of the group feels that he has some better way of arguing the group’s position he may replace the speaker of his group. Unless a consensus has been reached amongst the speakers after a given time (15 minutes) a vote is taken by all the participants.

The activity could be continued with a role play *Interview for a job.*

### **Interview for a job**

*Aims*

*Skills* – speaking

*Language* –asking questions, stating one’s impressions, giving information about oneself

*Other* –preparation for possible real life situation

*Preparation* – handout for each group

*Procedure*

Step 1. The class is divided into five groups. One group represents the members of the Personnel department of the company, each of four remaining groups, one of four applicants. The members of the Personnel department receive the full handout; each of the other groups gets the advertisements and their own applications.

Step 2. The Personnel department group works out the questions they would like to ask each applicant. The applicants prepare the answers/statements for the questions they think will be asked.

Step 3. The Personnel department group split into two groups, each interviews two of the applicants (these are chosen by the group who prepared the interview) simultaneously while the other members of each applicant's group watch and listen.

Step 4. The members of the Personnel department group come together again and report on the interviews they have conducted. Then they decide which applicant to accept. Meanwhile the applicants talk about the interviews and give their impressions of what was said.

In large classes there can be more applicants for the job.

Although role plays and simulations are quite demanding foreign language situations in which the players have to use the language correctly and adequately both in terms of the foreign language itself and the particular role that is acted out, these kinds of activities give students practice in real-world English. The materials necessary for role plays and simulations should be more varied and complex to suit the multi-layered structure of activities. To get students prepared for such kind of work, some discussion games and a number of the problem-solving activities can be used to improve students' fluency in the communication and train them to use their knowledge of the foreign language flexibly.

## **REFERENCES**

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2. Nation, P. Improving speaking fluency. *System*, 17(3), 1989.
3. Nunan, D. *Designing tasks for the communicative classrooms*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.